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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2299 (2016), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments related to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my last report (S/2017/357) and the briefing of my Special Representative to the Security Council on 22 May 2017.

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Political situation

2. On 9 July, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Haider al-Abadi, arrived in Mosul to congratulate Iraq's security forces on liberating the city from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The Prime Minister further stated that victory was around the corner. On 21 June, while the Iraqi security forces were reportedly approximately 100 metres south of the Nuri mosque, where ISIL had declared its so-called caliphate, ISIL destroyed the mosque and its iconic leaning minaret. On 29 June, Iraqi security forces announced that they had taken control of the area of the destroyed Nuri mosque. Iraqi security forces are currently making efforts to establish full control over the old city.

3. On 6 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi stressed the need to balance progress against ISIL with minimizing casualties among civilians and Iraqi security forces. On 13 June, he praised support from the people of Mosul to the Iraqi security forces and highlighted Government-established corridors for evacuating people from the old city.

4. As Mosul is freed from ISIL, military operations will increasingly focus on the border between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and on areas still under ISIL control. During their operations in Ninawa governorate, the popular mobilization forces and the Peshmerga reportedly established alliances with local fighters of various backgrounds, including in areas being contested by the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Tensions emerged over the operations of the popular mobilization forces in the Qayrawan subdistrict of Sinjar district, from

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12 to 23 May. On 23 May, Prime Minister Al-Abadi reaffirmed Baghdad's agreement with the Kurdistan Regional Government, under which the Peshmerga would keep control of areas in Ninawa governorate that they had held prior to the Mosul operation in October 2016. He emphasized the need to address disputed areas through dialogue and through the formation of a joint Iraqi security forces and Peshmerga force in Sinjar. According to a statement issued by the Peshmerga on 30 May and to a statement by the Presidency of the Kurdistan region of Iraq on 31 May, the liberation of Yazidi-majority villages by the popular mobilization forces contravenes a prior agreement that stipulated that a joint Iraqi security forces and Peshmerga force should liberate those villages. On 30 May, the Kurdistan Regional President, Massoud Barzani, warned against intrusions into disputed territories under the Kurdistan Regional Government's control prior to 2014.

5. While progress against ISIL is being achieved, this situation underscores the need to advance national reconciliation in parallel with that progress. On 17 May, under the sponsorship of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Salim al-Jubouri, and in coordination with UNAMI, a conference on the theme "The future of the Turkmens within a unified Iraq", attended by 500 participants, was convened. Representatives of the President and the Prime Minister, and heads of Turkmen political parties and Turkmen parliamentarians attended. The aim of the conference was to formulate a unified vision on post-ISIL Iraq and the role of the Turkmens.

6. UNAMI also received multiple papers from various groups on national reconciliation, which included recommendations from religious and ethnic minority groups, civil society and youth. The Mission is comparing and analysing these proposals to identify common themes, which will support future discussions of UNAMI with key stakeholders.

7. No tangible progress occurred in the implementation of the Popular Mobilization Commission Law. On 30 May, Prime Minister Al-Abadi stressed that all Iraqi security forces, including the popular mobilization forces, operated under his command. Several leaders of those forces reaffirmed the Prime Minister's statement on 13 June.

8. There was no progress on amending the legal framework for elections. The Council of Representatives continued to consider amendments to the Law on Provincial and District Council Elections (Law No. 36 of 2008, as amended), the Law on the Independent High Electoral Commission (Law No. 11 of 2007), and the Law on the Council of Representatives Elections (Law No. 45 of 2013). According to the calendar of the Independent High Electoral Commission, 16 April 2017 was the deadline for establishing clarity on the Law on Provincial and District Council Elections. This would have allowed adequate time to prepare for the provincial and district council elections, scheduled for 16 September 2017.

9. On 30 May, citing the Constitution of Iraq, Prime Minister Al-Abadi stated that the elections to the Council of Representatives would have to be held on time irrespective of progress on the legal framework. On 20 June, Speaker of Parliament Al-Jubouri noted that key legislation, including electoral laws, would be on the agenda of the Council of Representatives, which was scheduled to resume on 4 July after the Ramadan break. He commented on the infeasibility of holding provincial and district council elections on time, in September 2017, but noted that the elections to the Council of Representatives, planned for April 2018, would not be postponed.

10. On 7 June, a majority of the political parties represented in the Parliament of the Kurdistan region of Iraq agreed to hold a referendum on independence on 25 September 2017. They also committed to reactivate the Regional Parliament, which last met in October 2015. The Movement for Change (Gorran) and the

Kurdistan Islamic Group boycotted the 7 June meeting. Both averred that the Regional Parliament alone could call a referendum. On 7 June, the Governor of Kirkuk, Najmaldin Karim, reiterated that the referendum would also be held in Kirkuk.

11. On 8 June, Kurdistan Regional President Barzani signed Presidential Order No. 106/2017, calling on the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission and a new High Committee for the Referendum, made up of political party representatives, to make technical arrangements for the referendum. The order stipulated that a single yes-or-no question should comprise the referendum: "Do you agree on the independence of the Kurdistan region and the Kurdistan areas outside the administration of the region, and the establishment of an independent state?"

12. On 12 June, the Executive Committee of the Iraqi Turkmen Front affirmed its opposition to the referendum. On 15 June, a delegation of Members of Parliament from the Iraqi Forces Coalition, through my Special Representative, sent a letter expressing their opposition to the referendum, particularly in disputed areas outside the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

13. On 12 June, the Chair of the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission, Handren Mohammed, told the media that the institution had already received $6 million to prepare for the referendum and would move to set up 12,000 polling stations, including in disputed territories, to accommodate an estimated six million eligible voters. The High Committee on the Referendum, headed by President Barzani, has started to take shape with the setting up of two subcommittees, one on Baghdad-Erbil relations and the disputed territories, and the other on regional outreach.

14. On 13 June, UNAMI met with the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission in Erbil to clarify that the Mission would not provide support related to the referendum. Regarding United Nations support for parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, planned for 6 November 2017, UNAMI encouraged the Commission to communicate a request to the Independent High Electoral Commission in Baghdad, in line with the October 2015 memorandum of cooperation between the two entities. Following the meeting, regional media erroneously reported that UNAMI would oversee the independence referendum, provide training for staff and deploy observers. On 14 June, UNAMI issued a statement that it would not be engaged in any way or form in the referendum, in order to clarify the announcement by the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

15. On 9 June, a spokesperson for the federal Government stated that any decision on the future relationship between the Kurdistan region of Iraq and the Government of Iraq had to take all constitutional requirements into account. On 19 June, the head of the Independent High Electoral Commission Governorate Electoral Office in Kirkuk, Qais Muhammad, stated that no preparations for hosting the Kurdistan region of Iraq independence referendum in Kirkuk were being made, as no instructions had been issued from the federal Government.

16. Following a conversation on 10 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi and Kurdistan Regional President Barzani issued statements emphasizing the importance of dialogue. On 13 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi said he respected the aspirations of all Iraqi governorates but the time was not right for a referendum, considering the situation within Iraq and likely regional reactions. He announced that he would invite a delegation from the Kurdistan region of Iraq to visit Baghdad, to agree on a road map to resolve outstanding issues. On 19 June, Speaker of Parliament Al-Jubouri met with Kurdistan Regional President Barzani in Erbil to reiterate Prime Minister Al-Abadi's message. Following the meeting, the Presidency of the

Kurdistan region of Iraq issued a statement saying that the decision to hold a referendum was "irreversible", while at the same time stressing the need for dialogue. In a meeting with my Special Representative on 20 June 2017, President Barzani confirmed his position on holding a referendum on 25 September 2017.

17. International actors, including Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the United States of America reiterated their support for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and emphasized the need for dialogue within the framework of the Constitution of Iraq. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, reportedly confirmed the opposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the referendum in a meeting with Prime Minister Al-Abadi on 20 June in Tehran. The Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran underlined that the Kurdistan region of Iraq was part of Iraq, and reaffirmed the commitment of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq's territorial integrity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey called the move towards a referendum "a grave mistake" that "would have negative consequences which will cause further instability." On 13 June, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Boris Johnson, issued a statement saying a referendum at this time would distract from the more urgent priorities of defeating ISIL, stabilizing liberated areas and addressing the political issues that led to the rise of ISIL. He noted that such a plebiscite would first need to be agreed with the federal Government and cautioned that unilateral moves towards independence would harm the Kurdistan region of Iraq and regional stability.

18. On 19 June, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union issued a statement stressing that unilateral steps must be avoided and that all open questions must be resolved through consensual positions based on the full application of the provisions of the Constitution of Iraq. The European Union also called on the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to engage in dialogue on all issues across the political and economic spectrum, including disputed internal boundaries. On 11 June, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, stated that international reactions to the announcement of the referendum were "normal" and expected.

19. On 13 June, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan reached a preliminary agreement on the reactivation of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. According to the agreement, the Parliament would convene under the current speakership of Yousuf Mohammed (Gorran) for one session, after which the Speaker would resign and be replaced. On 14 June, the Movement for Change (Gorran) rejected the proposal and restated its longstanding position that the reconvening of parliament must be without preconditions. On 18 June, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan released a statement conditioning its support for the referendum on the reactivation of parliament and the passing of a law for the approval of the referendum.

B. Security

20. On 24 May, the popular mobilization forces launched operations in the Ba'aj district, liberating the district capital on 4 June. The popular mobilization forces reached the border of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic on 29 May and reinforced their defensive positions along the border. On 30 May, Prime Minister Al-Abadi emphasized that these operations had taken place on his orders, which was reiterated by the popular mobilization forces spokesperson, Ahmed al-Asadi, on 1 June. Mr. Asadi stressed that the popular mobilization forces would not enter the Syrian Arab Republic without the approval of the Council of Representatives and the Prime Minister. On 6 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi reiterated that Iraqi forces were not

allowed to cross the border into the Syrian Arab Republic. On 8 June, Mr. Asadi announced that the popular mobilization forces now controlled 55 km of the border between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 13 June, the Ministry of Defence of Iraq announced a joint coordination centre with the Ministry of Defence of the Syrian Arab Republic aimed at promoting cooperation in border control and intelligence sharing. On 17 June, the Iraqi security forces announced the liberation of the area along the borders of the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Jordan, including the Al-Waleed border post. One of the three official land crossings, this strategic post allows road access between Baghdad and Damascus through Anbar governorate.

21. ISIL continued to maintain its control over Hawijah district in Kirkuk governorate and over parts of Anbar governorate. Asymmetrical attacks were frequently launched against civilian and military targets in various governorates, including Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din. On 29 May, a suicide vehicle bomb detonated in the Karradah neighbourhood of Baghdad, killing at least 11 and wounding 47 people, mainly civilians celebrating Ramadan. Another suicide vehicle bomb exploded in the Karkh neighbourhood of Baghdad the next morning, killing 10 civilians and wounding 40. ISIL claimed responsibility for both attacks.

22. Since my last report, Iraqi security forces have intensified operations against ISIL in the Rutbah area of Anbar governorate and in northern Babil and eastern Diyala governorates, where increased ISIL activity has been reported since mid-May.

C. Rule of law

23. The rule of law in Iraq requires further strengthening. Kidnapping, extortion and hostage-taking, whatever the motive, are increasingly a problem. Such acts undermine trust in the Government and its security institutions. In May, the National Intelligence Cell, headed by Prime Minister Al-Abadi, acknowledged the interconnection between terrorism and organized crime and took measures to prevent, resolve and bring to justice perpetrators of such crimes. The Ministry of the Interior established a special unit that will aim to prevent, counter and investigate kidnappings.

24. Concern continued over the many hundreds of alleged disappearances which took place last year in Al-Sejar and Saqlawiyah in Anbar and at Razazah checkpoint and in 2017 in Taremia. These remain unresolved with no updates from the Government of Iraq regarding the status of investigations, despite formal requests by UNAMI. UNAMI is also assessing the veracity of allegations of the existence of secret prisons run by various armed groups.

D. Regional and international developments

25. Iraq continued its regional and international engagement to promote political, military, humanitarian and economic cooperation. On 18 May, the President of Iraq, Fuad Masum, met in Amman with the Hashemite King of Jordan, Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein, to discuss bilateral relations. On 20 May, President Masum, Vice-President Osama al-Nujaifi and Defence Minister Irfan al-Hayali travelled to Riyadh to attend the Arab Islamic American Summit. Commenting on the outcomes of the Summit, on 23 May the Prime Minister underscored that Iraq's regional relations were based on a recognition of common interests and stressed that the country's objective was to maintain a balance in its international affairs. He also expressed his view that the provision in the declaration agreed at the Summit to

establish a reserve force of 34,000 troops to support anti-terrorism operations in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq would apply only to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Prime Minister rejected foreign interference in Iraq's internal affairs and the presence of foreign forces on Iraqi territory without an explicit invitation, and insisted on the need for all countries to respect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

26. On 24 May, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Iraq, Mohammed al-Sudani, visited the United Arab Emirates, where he met with a senior official in the Ministry of the Economy to discuss economic cooperation. On 25 May, Iraq and the other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreed to extend the November 2016 crude oil output reduction agreement, due to expire in June, by another nine months. Prior to the OPEC meeting, on 22 May, Prime Minister Al-Abadi and Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi met with the Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia, Khalid bin Abdulaziz al-Falih, in Baghdad.

27. On 23 May, Prime Minister Al-Abadi indicated that a large sum of money, confiscated by the Iraqi authorities from a private Qatari aeroplane on 21 April, had not yet been returned to the Qatari authorities. He explained that a committee had been formed and that the matter would be referred to the judiciary after the committee issued its findings. The Prime Minister met with the Foreign Minister of Qatar, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, on 22 May, during which he received an official invitation from the Emir of Qatar to visit his country. Iraqi Speaker Al-Jubouri met with the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, in Doha on 4 June, confirming the importance of the bilateral relationship.

28. After Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and other countries announced that they would sever diplomatic ties with Qatar on 5 June, Vice-Presidents Ayad Allawi and Osama al-Nujaifi issued statements on the same day, calling for dialogue. On 6 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi reaffirmed Iraq's intention to maintain good relations with all countries in the region. On 12 June, President Masum was reported to offer Iraqi mediation to resolve the crisis through dialogue. On 13 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi reconfirmed that Iraq wanted to cooperate with all countries in the region and did not want to get involved in regional disputes. He stressed that his Government was against sanctions on other countries, as a matter of principle.

29. On 24 May, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, attended the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, held in Madrid. Mr. Al-Jaafari called on the international community to extend assistance to minorities so that they could remain in their ancestral places. On the margins of the conference, Mr. Al-Jaafari discussed bilateral relations with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Anwar Gargash, with a focus on the facilitation of entry visas for Iraqi citizens.

30. The Chancellor of the Security Council of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Masrour Barzani, visited Washington, D.C., from 15 to 22 May to discuss anti-ISIL operations. Among others, Chancellor Barzani met with members of the United States National Security Council, Assistant Secretary of Defense Kenneth Handelman, Senator John McCain and the United States President's Special Envoy for the international coalition to counter ISIL, Brett McGurk. From 1 to 3 June, Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Minister of Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami attended the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, where the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Russian Federation State-owned oil company Rosneft signed agreements to complement

their agreement of 21 February, aimed at increasing mutual cooperation in the oil and gas sector.

31. On 19 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi embarked on a regional tour, starting with Saudi Arabia and including visits to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kuwait. The Prime Minister met King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. On 20 June, the two countries issued a joint statement, which called for increased cooperation in political, security, economic, trade, investment and energy related matters. On 20 and 21 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi held meetings in the Islamic Republic of Iran with President Hassan Rouhani, Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani. On 21 June, Prime Minister Al-Abadi met with the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah. While in Kuwait, Prime Minister Al-Abadi also met with the Prime Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah, and with the First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Khaled al-Hamad al-Sabah.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

32. My Special Representative continued his engagement with government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, women's groups, civil society and religious and community leaders to foster inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation, particularly in the post-ISIL period. In his meetings, he underlined the need to safeguard victories against ISIL through building a unified, equal and just Iraq. He called on all political, tribal and community leaders to reject sectarianism and to promote equal participation in the political process, good governance and the rule of law, justice, accountability and equal rights for all citizens. My Special Representative underscored the importance of ensuring voluntary, safe and dignified returns for displaced persons to their homes and the restoration of security and normalcy in liberated areas.

33. My Special Representative continued his engagement with Iraqi parties and countries in the region in support of the National Settlement Initiative as a means of ensuring Iraq's long-term unity and stability. He has encouraged all groups, including minorities, civil society and tribal representatives, to continue sharing their respective visions of national reconciliation and principles for rebuilding post-ISIL Iraq.

34. In addition, on 24 May UNAMI convened a national conference in Baghdad on the theme "Iraq after conflict", which brought together civil society representatives, academics, journalists, activists and tribal and religious leaders from 13 governorates, with the aim of gauging the political aspirations of Iraqis for the post-ISIL phase. Drawing from six previous round tables across the country over the past five months, conference participants endorsed a set of recommendations. On 12 June, a delegation of five civil society actors representing the participants in the six round tables, accompanied by my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, shared the recommendations with the Chair of the National Reconciliation Commission at the Office of the Prime Minister, Jaafar al-Husseini.

35. My Special Representative continued to meet regularly with political leaders, as part of an ongoing effort to facilitate dialogue between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. He urged Baghdad and Erbil to leverage their military cooperation to engage in high-level negotiations on outstanding

issues, including the independence referendum, disputed boundaries and territories, oil exports, revenue sharing, support for the Peshmerga and the voluntary and dignified return of displaced persons to their homes. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs travelled to Erbil and Kirkuk, on 29 May and 6 June respectively, to reiterate the need for dialogue with Baghdad on current political issues. He also offered assurances to partners on the readiness of UNAMI to support efforts to maintain peace and security. My Special Representative visited the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and held meetings in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah with President Barzani and top representatives of the leading political forces, alongside representatives of civil society, on 21 June.

36. UNAMI continued to advocate for the safe return to their homes, relevant legislation and other reforms to respect and protect the rights of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious minority communities. Minorities continue to bear a disproportionate toll. I am pleased to note the announcement by the Supreme Judicial Council on 12 June that it would establish a commission to document and investigate crimes against Yazidis. My Deputy Special Representative attended the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, held on 24 May in Madrid. The Conference discussed the road map set forth in the Paris Action Plan adopted at the previous conference. A total of 59 countries and 10 international and regional organizations participated, and unanimously expressed support for minorities, particularly in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. My Deputy Special Representative emphasized that the Government of Iraq needed to implement confidence-building measures that facilitate national and civic-led reconciliation, protect diversity and guarantee the constitutional rights of minorities.

37. With a view to advancing the agenda on women and peace and security and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), UNAMI advocated the implementation of the national strategy for the advancement of women with the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. UNAMI supported a social peace initiative launched by women parliamentarians from Ninawa, which the Council of Representatives endorsed. Civil society groups and other activists continued to advocate for the withdrawal of proposed amendments to the Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959, currently under consideration by the Council of Representatives.

38. The United Nations in Iraq has active partnerships with civil society organizations on the reform of legislative frameworks that protect women and children from all forms of violence. To address conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq, UNAMI continued to support the Government of Iraq's efforts on the implementation of the joint communiqué between the Government and the United Nations. Round-table forums with religious leaders continued, constituting broad consultations to explore community-based protection actions and to advance the protection of survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape. Protection for children born of rape remains a concern because of the associated stigma.

B. Electoral assistance

39. The process to select the new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission was met with keen interest both by political parties and the general public. The outgoing Commissioners complete their term on 20 September 2017. While most political forces agree that the current Board should complete its tenure, some parliamentarians associated with Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr continue to advocate for the immediate dismissal of the current Board.

40. The ad hoc committee of the Council of Representatives tasked with the selection of the next Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission continued its work. At the request of the Council of Representatives, UNAMI has been attending the meetings of the ad hoc committee, providing technical assistance in developing criteria for screening applicants and preparing the selection process. Of 948 applications, the committee shortlisted 109 applicants for interviews, seven of whom are women. The committee has sent the shortlist to the relevant ministries and commissions for vetting. Interviews were scheduled to take place after Ramadan. The committee announced its intention to complete the selection before the expiration of the current Board's term on 20 September 2017. UNAMI has advocated for the inclusion of qualified women on the next Board.

41. As at 8 June, only 71 political parties had registered out of 250 parties that submitted their applications to the Independent High Electoral Commission for the provincial and district council elections. There has been limited coverage of the special registration process for voters who are displaced persons, with only 265,000 registered thus far out of an estimated 1.6 million displaced, which amounts to 16 per cent. Hence, other important milestones in the electoral calendar are behind schedule.

42. Despite uncertainties concerning the electoral calendar, the Independent High Electoral Commission continues planning for future electoral events, with UNAMI providing advisory support on a number of preparatory activities, including finalization of the necessary regulations and electoral procedures. The Commission has made progress in preparing for the printing of electronic voter cards and the production of electronic ballot-counting technologies.

43. The Independent High Electoral Commission and the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission made progress in implementing the memorandum of cooperation signed between the two institutions, facilitated by UNAMI. On 28 May, the Independent High Electoral Commission shared with the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission files containing the list of registered voters for Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah governorates. This took place after a delegation from the Independent High Electoral Commission visited Erbil between 8 and 11 May to assess the capacities and needs of the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission with regard to the voter registry, the results and database management.

C. Human rights developments and activities

44. Armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a toll on civilians. Between 23 May and 11 June 2017, at least 445 civilian men, women and children were killed and at least 326 were wounded, bringing the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the beginning of the armed conflict in January 2014 to at least 82,365 (28,938 killed and 53,427 wounded).

45. As more civilians are liberated from ISIL, the extent of the group's human rights violations is becoming evident. UNAMI has received an overwhelming number of reports indicating serious and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and gross abuses of human rights perpetrated by ISIL. The group continued to use civilians and civilian infrastructure and private homes as shields and has conducted organized terrorist activities directly targeting civilians. In addition, sources indicate that there may be 1,670 Yazidi women and girls who remain in ISIL enslavement (latest figures available as at 30 April).

46. UNAMI continued to advocate for accountability in the context of human rights violations and abuses committed in the ongoing armed conflict, in particular serious crimes that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and,

possibly, genocide. UNAMI also continued advocating for legal reforms and worked on expanding the capacities of the judiciary to address international crimes effectively. UNAMI has also been promoting the need for proper protection of mass graves, with the aim of collecting and preserving evidence.

47. ISIL continued to target civilians in areas retaken by Iraqi security forces, including through shelling and weaponized drones. For example, on 17 May an attack by ISIL using drone-delivered explosives at the main entrance of the main hospital of Sharqat district city centre, Salah al-Din, killed one police officer and wounded five male civilians and three police officers.

48. ISIL continued to punish civilians accused of cooperating with Iraqi security forces and for trying to flee areas under its control. On 22 May, ISIL reportedly killed 16 civilians in Hawija district, Kirkuk governorate. The victims were accused of cooperation with Iraqi security forces and/or helping families to flee areas controlled by the group. On 23 May, ISIL captured 11 civilian men on a street in the ISIL-controlled Saraj Khana neighbourhood of western Mosul, while they were fleeing towards Iraqi security forces positions. Later on the same day, ISIL shot and killed them in the same location, leaving the bodies on the street.

49. Several mass casualty attacks, either claimed by ISIL or which bore the hallmarks of previous attacks carried out by the armed group, occurred in various governorates. On 19 May, two double suicide attacks in Baghdad and Basrah governorate in total killed at least 29 people and wounded at least 56 others. On 28 May, a suicide attacker on a motorbike detonated his belt in Ba'qubah city, Diyala governorate. Five persons were killed and 11 others and 3 police members were wounded. On 30 May, two suicide vehicle attacks targeting public places in central Baghdad killed at least 20 civilians and wounded at least 68. On the same day, an attack by an individual wearing an explosive vest in Hit city centre, Anbar governorate, killed at least 10 civilians and wounded at least 24. Four Iraqi Army members were also reportedly killed.

50. UNAMI received reports of violations committed by government and pro-government forces, and referred these cases to the Government for investigation. UNAMI reiterated that the Government must prevent such incidents from occurring, investigate them and, whenever they are substantiated, hold the perpetrators accountable. For example, on 5 May, reportedly the Al-Sab'awi tribal committee met in Hajj Ali village, Qayyarah subdistrict of Mosul. The outcome was a written decision that subcommittees are to be formed to prepare lists of alleged ISIL members and families with members who are allegedly associated with ISIL, and then evict those on the lists. Later on the same day, in Ein Mozan village, Qayyarah subdistrict, 11 members of one family were evicted by the local Al-Sab'awi community. UNAMI received reports of civilians being killed and wounded as a result of government operations and Iraqi and international counter-ISIL coalition air strikes. On 28 May, an air strike hit a group of civilians as they were walking in the ISIL-controlled old city of Mosul. The air strike reportedly killed 15 civilians, including four women and two children, and wounded eight others, including a child and three women.

51. Children continue to be heavily affected by the conflict in Iraq. In particular, the ongoing offensive in the Mosul area and counter-terrorism efforts highlighted a number of child protection challenges. During the month of May, the United Nations documented 40 incidents of violations against children, affecting a total of 74 children; 37 incidents involved killing and maiming, primarily in Ninawa governorate, with 18 children confirmed killed and 56 maimed. The United Nations also documented three incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals in Ninawa.

52. The high number of attacks on health facilities and health personnel, reported by the World Health Organization (WHO), is concerning. Parties to the conflict need to be mindful about their international humanitarian law obligations to respect the sanctuary of health facilities and of their accountability for any transgressions.

53. Following the conclusion of the battle for Mosul, the return of displaced persons to their homes will become an important undertaking; principled and needs-based humanitarian assistance will remain crucial, which includes ensuring that returns are safe and voluntary. The international community needs to ensure that people who have lost everything receive help. Safety and security will be key to creating conditions conducive for return. The protection of civilians must remain at the centre of the counter-ISIL approach. Even after ISIL is expelled from Mosul, respect for international humanitarian and human rights law will remain fundamental to reconciliation and recovery.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

54. Iraq's humanitarian situation continues to affect millions of people. Since the start of the Mosul operation in October 2016, more than 878,000 people have fled, including 702,000 from western neighbourhoods. Following the Government's 25 May announcement recommending that civilians in the old city leave their homes and evacuate with the assistance of Iraqi security forces, humanitarian partners have been bracing for large-scale displacement.

55. Civilians in areas where fighting is ongoing are at severe risk. Entrances to the old city are strictly controlled and there are reports of booby-trapped buildings and homes. Civilians are being used as human shields and ISIL snipers are targeting families, including children, who try to flee. Food, safe drinking water and medicine are in short supply. While most civilians will leave, many, including the elderly and disabled, may be stranded, unable or unwilling to leave and at risk from bombardment, crossfire and lack of water and electricity.

56. The rate of trauma injuries among people fleeing Mosul is alarming. Nearly 13,600 people have received emergency medical care at trauma stabilization points and been referred to specialized hospital care at field hospitals since October 2016. Of the 7,500 injured in fighting in western Mosul, nearly a third are female or children under the age of 15 years.

57. Of the 878,000 people who have fled the hostilities in Mosul, 682,000 are displaced. Half are sheltered in 19 camps and emergency sites established by authorities and humanitarian partners around Mosul. Emergency food and water are being provided to people along routes out of the city. Shading to protect people from the sun has been set up in screening sites. Camp capacity continues to expand rapidly and is keeping pace with displacements. A new camp managed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to house 11,000 people opened to the south-west of the city in May. Assistance is being provided in camps and at out-of-camp locations, including in returnee and host communities in eastern Mosul and in accessible neighbourhoods of western Mosul. Since mid-October, 1.5 million people have received emergency response packages of food, water and hygiene items. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its partners continued to transport 6.3 million litres of water into neighbourhoods in eastern and western Mosul. The Mine Action Service of the Secretariat continued to assess the threat of explosive hazards and to clear explosive hazards in return areas.

58. From 1 March to 4 June, WHO provided technical and logistical support to clinically manage 192 patients, including women and children diagnosed with symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic agents. Four people have died. On

12 June, an outbreak of a food-borne illness occurred in Hasan Shami U2 camp, which accommodates over 7,000 displaced people from Mosul. According to health authorities, 825 people were affected; 638 people were referred to various health facilities and 386 people were admitted to hospitals in Erbil. The directorates of health in Erbil and Ninawa, with the support of health partners, responded swiftly and most of the affected people recovered quickly. Following the incident, authorities and humanitarian partners have taken steps to strengthen the coordination of food distribution to displaced people.

59. The Ministry of Health, with support from WHO and UNICEF, conducted a polio immunization campaign in May, reaching more than 61,300 children, aged five years or younger, in Ninawa, Erbil and Dahuk. Authorities continued to provide primary health services, including reproductive health and nutrition services, in emergency sites and camps in conflict-affected governorates, with support from WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and other partners.

60. Displacement from ISIL-controlled areas continues, including from Tall Afar, Hawija and Anbar, in smaller numbers. More than 20,000 people in Anbar have made the 500 km journey from Qa'im city to the Kilo 18 transit site between January and June. The humanitarian presence is low in Anbar governorate. No partners are operating west of Hit. This is compromising the speed of the needed response.

61. Returns continued across Iraq. More than 1.8 million people have returned to their homes in retaken areas, half of them in Anbar. Nearly 180,000 people have returned to eastern Mosul and to accessible areas of the west. Returnees are often vulnerable and continue to require humanitarian and protection assistance as people rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Once the Mosul operation concludes, the return of displaced people to their home areas will become an important and sensitive undertaking. Principled and needs-based humanitarian assistance will be required to help ensure that returns are safe, dignified and voluntary.

62. During the reporting period, the United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization continued to expand. By June 2017, more than 1,000 projects were under way or had been completed in 23 liberated towns and districts in Anbar, Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk governorates. Using fast-track procedures, the Funding Facility is implementing more than 230 projects in eastern Mosul, including rehabilitation of water systems, the electricity grid and sewage facilities. Generators have been provided to Mosul University to enable 10,000 students to take their exams and thousands of people are working on public schemes, and thus earning incomes to support their families. The road from western Mosul to the Al-Athbah hospital has been restored to allow ambulances to pass quickly. Several additional projects are focused on repairing severely damaged components of the electricity grid, water and sewage networks and transport infrastructure. In the Ninawa plains, more than 150 projects are under way to support minority communities. Stabilization efforts are continuing in Fallujah and Ramadi, and will accelerate in parts of Diyala. Following successful pilots, initiatives to help women-headed households restart their lives and to help destitute families to repair damaged homes have been added to the Funding Facility.

63. In support of stabilization and humanitarian action, the Mine Action Service continued to work with the Iraqi authorities to identify, mark, clear and remove unexploded ordinance and improvised explosive devices. The Mine Action Service also worked with the authorities to help non-governmental organizations obtain accreditation, and to consider options on restricted use of explosives for demolitions.

64. The post-Mosul recovery and resilience programme made significant progress. Coordination mechanisms have been established with government counterparts for each of the eight components and framing papers are being written. The recovery and resilience programme is being designed to support the Government's new five-year national development plan, its 10-year reconstruction plan and its poverty reduction strategy, which is envisioned as a mechanism for transitioning from humanitarian action and stabilization to the Government's social protection net. The technical working group helping to develop the poverty reduction strategy, which includes members of the United Nations country team and the World Bank, met from 26 to 30 June in Beirut.

65. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Oxfam conducted a gender and conflict analysis of ISIL-affected communities. The study found that in many areas radical gender norms have been introduced, including strict separation of the sexes in public spaces and rules about attire. Women in ISIL-affected areas played roles protecting their families. There are reported shifts in household dynamics, which could serve to help women resume paid work and increase their decision-making role at home and in communities. The study uncovered pressures on men who refused to join ISIL, including loss of jobs, closure of businesses and restrictions on movement. UNAMI and the United Nations country team are using these insights to shape their recovery, resilience and reconciliation engagement.

E. Security and operational issues

66. The United Nations in Iraq continues to work in a high risk and fluid security environment to implement its programmes and activities based on programme criticality. Humanitarian assistance and stabilization needs have consistently increased, as more areas have been liberated from ISIL. Ninawa governorate and in particular Mosul remain at the centre of the conflict, resulting in a large number of displacements and increasing humanitarian needs. Meanwhile, asymmetric attacks by ISIL against security forces in Diyala, Salah al-Din and west Anbar governorates continued. Baghdad has recorded numerous asymmetric attacks in the form of improvised explosive device detonations in public places such as markets and commercial areas, resulting in high numbers of civilian casualties. Security advisories and temporary restrictions were put in place as precautionary measures. Despite the security challenges, the United Nations and its partners remain proactively engaged in delivering programmes and activities. The Humanitarian Support Cell of the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat, based in Erbil, has facilitated 49 very high risk and 485 high residual risk missions, in support of United Nations humanitarian programmes and activities from October 2016 to June 2017. The United Nations Security Management System in Iraq maintains close coordination with the host Government and appropriate security measures for United Nations operations remain in place.

67. Construction and renovation in the integrated United Nations compound in Baghdad continued. In January, 57 new accommodation units were added in Baghdad and 79 new accommodation units are projected to be completed in July 2017. Another 116 new accommodation units are scheduled for completion by August 2018 and planning has commenced for 250 additional office spaces. The renovation of infrastructure, offices and other facilities is ongoing. The Mission reduced its carbon footprint by implementing new measures to minimize solid waste and by changing lighting and air conditioning fixtures into energy-saving alternatives. The Mission started producing 240 kWs of renewable energy on 28 February 2017, through a photovoltaic farm.

IV. Observations

68. I congratulate the people of Iraq on the recovery of Mosul from ISIL. I applaud their courage, determination and perseverance in standing up against terrorism. The continuous, significant advances against ISIL are ample proof of what Iraqis can achieve when they reach across sectarian and other divides and work collectively for the future of their country. I pay tribute to the security forces and civilians who have made sacrifices in that fight, and I commend the role played by Iraq's international partners. Despite these momentous victories, the next stage requires continued dedication and resolve. The ultimate defeat of ISIL can only be secured through a long-term process that improves governance, provides better services, installs appropriate security arrangements for all communities, ensures justice and accountability and promotes reconciliation.

69. Iraqi political and community leaders have continued to engage constructively with my Special Representative on achieving a national settlement. I welcome their commitment. The Iraqi people need inclusive solutions to overcome the challenges they have faced over the past decades. In coordination with the Government, the United Nations will accelerate its efforts towards reconciliation and a national settlement.

70. I welcome grassroots initiatives that bolster the national reconciliation process, such as forums on the theme "Iraq: youth and coexistence" and round tables on the theme "Iraq after conflict", which UNAMI facilitated. I urge Iraqi political leaders to continue engaging with youth, women, civil society and minority representatives, in recognition of the role they need to play in advancing an inclusive national settlement. UNAMI will support initiatives that promote sustainability and local ownership and reinforce the momentum towards national and societal reconciliation.

71. Less than 10 months remain until the next elections for the Council of Representatives, which are constitutionally scheduled to take place no later than May 2018. Insufficient progress has been made to date to prepare for the provincial and district council elections, currently scheduled for September 2017. I would like to emphasize the importance of holding periodic, inclusive, transparent and credible elections according to the Constitution and law of the country, including in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, that reflect the will of the people. I call on Iraqi leaders to make the necessary decisions in due time and to communicate them to the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Iraqi people. I urge the Council of Representatives to expedite its consideration of amendments to the legal framework for elections, including with regard to the Law on Provincial and District Council Elections, the Law on the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Law on the Council of Representatives Elections. In addition, I call on the authorities to take immediate steps to expedite voter registration among the approximately 1.6 million displaced persons.

72. Although major military operations against ISIL are expected to conclude by the end of this year, the security environment will remain volatile, with continued terrorist attacks that target civilians and security forces in many parts of the country. Long-term comprehensive reform of the security sector remains essential so as to meet these challenges. The ongoing efforts to proceed with the implementation of a national strategy for security sector reform, led by the Iraqi National Security Council with support from international partners, including the United Nations, are welcomed.

73. I urge the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to reinforce the existing cooperation and coordination mechanisms between the Iraqi

security forces and the Peshmerga, especially those in Ninawa governorate in places such as Sinjar district. I am concerned about reports indicating a proliferation of local armed groups without proper government oversight. Inclusive and effective security arrangements must immediately be put in place in these liberated areas, with local authorities assisted by central structures taking on the responsibility for security. Failure to address this issue properly would increase the risk of a new confrontation emerging in the post-ISIL era.

74. I reiterate my call for determined actions by the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve all outstanding issues between them. Dialogue leading to constructive compromises and mutually acceptable and sustainable solutions is essential. The end of major anti-ISIL operations has already brought to the fore outstanding issues from the past, with new issues related to the terrorist project by ISIL and the fight against it. If these outstanding issues are not addressed through negotiations, their latent potential to create crisis and conflict may manifest itself and undermine stability and security. This, in particular, includes the issues of disputed boundaries and territories, implementation of article 140 of the Constitution, including Kirkuk and its unresolved status, the independence referendum, as well as the voluntary and unhindered return of displaced persons under conditions of security. Unilateral steps, especially those that do not conform to the Constitution and laws of Iraq and the Kurdistan region of Iraq, would escalate the situation and lead to tensions and crisis, as well as create conditions for the re-emergence of violent extremist groups.

75. In the light of these concerns, I take note of the announced intention of the Kurdistan Regional Government and some local authorities to hold a referendum not only in the Kurdistan region of Iraq but also in some of the areas disputed between Baghdad and Erbil, including Kirkuk. I also take note of the statement by Prime Minister Al-Abadi that the time is not right for such a referendum, notwithstanding his respect for the aspirations of all Iraqi governorates. The positive momentum of the joint fight against ISIL, as well as the precious gains made through enormous sacrifices, may be at risk without a results-oriented dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil that should start without delay. I strongly hope that both sides will remain committed to their declared objective of resolving outstanding issues through constructive talks.

76. I call on the Council of Representatives and the Government to accelerate the adoption of key outstanding legislation, including the legal basis for the distribution of oil revenues, the Federation Council Law and the Components' Rights Law, and to decide on proposed amendments to other important legislation, such as the Justice and Accountability Law. I note that elected institutions have a special responsibility to measure up to the expectations of the Iraqi people and to promote confidence in the democratic process.

77. In the post-ISIL period, improved service delivery and good governance will be even more critical. This will require strong determination by Iraqi decision makers, at the national and local levels, to work together to improve conditions for the Iraqi population. Rampant corruption, which is a recurrent concern for most Iraqis, needs to be addressed through decisive and timely interventions.

78. Armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continue to take a terrible toll in terms of loss of civilian lives and injuries. Women, children and other vulnerable groups continue to disproportionately suffer from the consequences of the conflict. The situation in Mosul remains of concern. ISIL has continued to target civilians in liberated areas, including through shelling, and has continued to punish civilians for allegedly trying to flee areas under its control. I also note reports of the targeting of civilians in Ninawa by pro-government tribal groups, including through forced

evictions. If proven, such concerning actions would weaken the rule of law in retaken areas and work against the return of displaced persons to all liberated areas. This could undermine stability and security in the country. I call on the Government of Iraq to step up efforts to ensure accountability for atrocity crimes committed in the context of the current conflict in Iraq in accordance with Iraq's international obligations and international norms and standards. The United Nations stands ready to increase its technical assistance to the Government of Iraq to strengthen its capacity to collect information and evidence on atrocity crimes, adapt its national legislation and try those responsible for such crimes.

79. Once again, I stress that all necessary actions must be taken to enable the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons, including from minority communities, and to protect fully their civil and political rights, including their enfranchisement in the forthcoming elections. This should be done through proper coordination with all Iraqi security forces, including local police, to create an atmosphere free from fear and intimidation, without retribution, retaliation and forced evictions. I encourage the Government to continue its efforts to put in place effective governance and security arrangements in Ninawa and other liberated governorates.

80. I am pleased to say that on 19 June I received a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, expressing the wish of the Government of Iraq that the mandate of UNAMI be extended for a period of one year through 31 July 2018, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1770 (2007). In addition, I am pleased to report that on 29 June the Government of Iraq and the Secretariat reached agreement on the texts of the memorandums of understanding and exchange of letters required for concluding the implementation of Security Council resolution 1958 (2010).

81. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and the staff of the United Nations in Iraq for their unstinting and courageous efforts in implementing the United Nations mandate in Iraq under very challenging circumstances.